

Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report August 2002

I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:

Surveillance

- Collaboration across federal agencies to improve surveillance – APHIS has begun working with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other federal agencies to cooperate in zoonotic infectious disease surveillance. CDC hosted a meeting at VS' Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health in Fort Collins in August to identify and kick-off collaborative initiatives. APHIS is also in the process of developing a cooperative agreement with FSIS to enhance the value of condemnation data collected by FSIS. In addition, APHIS has established a liaison position to be placed at the FSIS Training Center in College Station Texas to work with FSIS on sample collection, training, and data integration. Dr. Bob Sanders has been selected into this position. Safeguarding review recommendation #13 called for APHIS to seek opportunities to utilize the resources of other federal agencies to enhance the national surveillance system.
- Feedback mechanisms for surveillance activities – APHIS is collaborating with the National Pork Board to transition existing State Pseudorabies Committees into State Swine Health Committees which could provide input on priorities and activities for coordinated swine health surveillance. Safeguarding Review recommendation #2 called for developing and utilizing steering committees to provide guidance and feedback on surveillance activities.

Response

- Work on APHIS Emergency Operations Center to begin shortly – A bid has been accepted and a pre-construction meeting held regarding construction of the APHIS Emergency Operations Center (AEOC) in Riverdale, Maryland. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2002. Standard operating procedures for the AEOC are being developed based on recommendations and observations from a visit to the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.
- Third Emergency Preparedness Satellite Seminar to be held September 5th – During FY 2002, APHIS sponsored three emergency preparedness satellite seminars. These seminars reach a worldwide audience. The September 5th seminar will focus on the Incident Command System at USDA and the Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza activities.
- International collaboration on disease models - Veterinary Services' analysts are collaborating with analysts in Canada, Mexico, Australia, and Belgium to develop

a disease-spread model that will be used to evaluate control methods, including vaccination, of an FMD outbreak. A workshop, sponsored by the North American Animal Health Committee (NAAHC) and hosted by VS, was held in July 2002 to review several disease-spread models and identify critical enhancements.

Analysts and decision-makers developed a plan to enhance a VS model that the NAAHC will use in response planning exercises and FMD vaccine bank decisions. The current version of the VS model has already been used for several regional FMD test exercises. Safeguarding Review recommendation #10 encouraged increased participation in international animal health discussions and activities.

- APHIS participates in Australian foreign animal disease training exercise – APHIS will send Dr. Mark Teachman to participate in Australia's foreign animal disease training exercise September 9 – 13th. Safeguarding Review recommendation #10 encouraged increased participation in international animal health discussions and activities.

Exclusion

- Developing animal health capacities overseas – APHIS veterinarians recently provided training to Nigerian state, federal, and university veterinarians. This training was a prelude to an epidemiological project to be undertaken in Nigeria for which APHIS will also provide assistance. In September APHIS veterinarians will be assisting veterinarians in Swaziland in applying geographical information systems. Safeguarding Review recommendation #48 encourages increased assistance in foreign countries as a means of protecting the U.S. from foreign animal diseases.
- Enhanced Swine Health Protection Act inspections – Over a 6 month period, APHIS is funding additional inspections in states which permit garbage feeding. Inspectors in those states will make weekly inspections of known garbage feeding facilities to ensure compliance and to report any irregularities, violations, or evidence of unhealthy animals. Safeguarding Review recommendation #59 calls for review and updating of the Swine Health Protection Act.

Laboratory System

- Increased laboratory capacity for CWD/TSE – Contracts have been awarded to Wisconsin, Michigan, Cornell, and Texas A&M – Amarillo to expand capacity for CWD/TSE diagnostic testing. As a result of these awards, 10 state laboratories and NVSL are available to conduct TSE testing. Solicitation for additional laboratories is underway. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations point toward the establishment of a national animal health laboratory system (#s 17, 74, 121)

- Progress towards new laboratory facilities – Kick off meetings were held with the architectural firms designing the BL2 Animal Building and the Consolidated Laboratory Building. Final comments were provided as well on the Program of Requirements for the BL3 Ag Animal Building and an architectural firm should be selected soon to begin designing this building. A site will be selected during September for the APHIS Supplemental Laboratory into which the current Diagnostic Bacteriology and Pathobiology Laboratories will be moved. Safeguarding Review recommendations #18, 73, and 94 supported improving laboratory facilities

Veterinary Accreditation

- Developing new training modules for accredited veterinarians – The first of two focus group meetings on veterinary accreditation training will be held September 9 and 10th. Work is also continuing on upgrading the Practitioners Guide to Accreditation. Safeguarding Review recommendations #s145, 146 and 147 call for revisions to the veterinary accreditation program including the development of updated training materials.

Organizational Dynamics/Communications

- Special Foreign Animal Disease schools educate additional partners – FAD schools were held this summer for veterinary medical officers in APHIS Animal Care and for members of the US Army Vet corps. An international FAD school for Central and South American veterinarians is planned for September. A poultry specific FAD course will also be held in September. Additional courses are planned in the next year for laboratory diagnosticians and FSIS veterinarians. An FAD awareness course is also being developed jointly with Cornell University for 3rd year veterinary students. APHIS will send three federal veterinarians to a foreign animal disease school in South Africa as part of an ongoing educational exchange in which South Africa veterinarians attend APHIS FAD schools. Safeguarding Review recommendation #68 called for enhancing foreign animal disease training programs.
- Emergency management curriculum being developed – An emergency management curriculum is being developed in collaboration with the Technical Support Working Group (TSWG) of the Department of Defense. This curriculum outlines baseline competencies that various target audiences should possess to effectively perform their duties and will include classroom and distance learning foreign animal disease courses as well as other pertinent emergency management courses. National managers, state managers, incident investigators, and laboratory personnel will have the opportunity to take courses. Safeguarding Review recommendation #68 called for enhancing foreign animal disease training programs.

- Enhanced communications – APHIS is in the process of developing a communications plan for FY 2003. Included in the plan will be an annual report for Veterinary Services. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations encouraged improved communications and the development of an annual report (#s 85, 88, 99, 140)

Information Technology

- Incorporating GIS – A prototype has been completed integrating GIS into the Emergency Management Response System (EMRS). The prototype will now be tested and a final product is expected to be ready for use by mid-October. APHIS completed the training of 55 Area and Regional office personnel to serve as the primary GIS resource for Veterinary Services. These individuals will also facilitate the collection of information at the field level for the National Mapping Systems project. Under the National Mapping Systems project, geographic coordinates and facility information for all feedlots, livestock/poultry markets, and slaughter facilities will be collected and entered into the Generic Disease Database. Safeguarding Review recommendation #129 encouraged better use of spatial data.
- Electronic interstate health certificate to be developed – A project proposal to develop an electronic interstate health certificate was made available for bid to various contractors. Development of an electronic certificate will support the concept of electronic commerce in APHIS and surveillance initiatives as well. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations encouraged the use of technology to improve APHIS activities (# 77, 81)

II. Implementation activities:

Safeguarding Issue Group leaders are assisting in the development of a VS Strategic Plan covering the years FY 2004 through FY 2008. A VS strategic planning meeting was held in Riverdale, Maryland during the week of August 26th. Many of the priority needs identified in the Safeguarding Review will be reflected in the VS Strategic Plan and performance goals and measures will be utilized to track progress.

The Coordinated Response Issue Group will be meeting in September to continue their work on developing Action Plans to address key response issue areas.

A subgroup of the Organizational Dynamics Issue Group continues to investigate the possibility of utilizing a communications consultant to assist in developing action plans to address the numerous communications issues identified in the Safeguarding Review.

The Information Technology Issue Group continued gathering information to support its development of action plans. The group is compiling an inventory of computers and resource people within VS to use as a baseline in considering new IT needs identified by

all of the issue groups. Members of the issue group also interviewed Dr. Jim Case to discuss how his work on setting standard veterinary definitions could be applied to the development of data standards in VS.

Members of the Veterinary Accreditation issue group worked with computer specialists to examine the feasibility of a centrally available system for area office and program specialists to export data from the Veterinary Accreditation System into communication packages for sending out faxes, email messages, and postal mail to appropriate accredited veterinarians in their states.